

1630

The EARL of
LOTHIAN'S
SPEECH
 TO THE
General Assembly, &c.

Right Reverend Ministers and Elders of this General Assembly,

I Shall not take up your Time with any thing concerning my self, being sensible of so many Natural Unfitnesses for the Character I bear, that it were no little Disingenuity, to endeavour by an Apology to extenuate them; But being very unexpectedly Commanded by the King, whose Orders I Dispute not, to meet you at this Assembly, I choosed rather to expose my Reputation which hitherto I have been tender enough of, with this Disadvantage to come after a Person so well Qualified and Fitted for this Affair; then to decline any thing wherein His Majesty may think I could in the least be Serviceable to Him, or have any Prospect of being any manner of way Instrumental in settling the Peace of the Church, which hath for so long a time been Rent, without any great appearance hitherto of an effectual ways for its Healing.

And indeed the known Inclinations of His Majesty to go the greatest length can consist with Royalty, to effectuate so good a Work, are no less Encouragements to your Well-wishers, then they should be Incitements to make you go all the Lengths and Advances on your parts, that such a Pious and Protestant King deserves at your Hands, who is willing to do more voluntarily, than what could ever be extorted from His Royal Predecessors, even in their lowest Condition; And which can in Reason never be expected from any shall succeed in the Royal Throne. But as no less was to be look'd for from the Return of your Prayers, and your sincere Endeavours in the work of the Ministry in the midst of sharpest Tryals, than the blessing of such a King, your Deliverer, who in following the Steps of his Renowned and Noble Predecessors the Princes of *Orange*, the Bulwark and Deliverers of the Protestant Interest throughout the world, hath now in a manner put it in your own Hands, to settle the Peace, and Unity of our Church; so upon the other hand, if there should be any Shyness or Remissness in coming up the length to give His Majesty a sutable Return, as it will be justly thought by your Friends, a Stroke from Heaven, from hidden Causes of GODS unsearchable Decrees, as the Destruction of the Primitive Churches were; So the Opportunity lost, will be an Advantage and Rejoicing to your Enemies, probably not to be regained. But I shall wish and hope for better things from this Reverend and Wise Assembly, who have in your own Hands, to make your selves a more general one, by uniting the Church, removing Error and Scandal, stopping the Mouths of your Adversaries, and make the Church of *Scotland* more Famous than any Church, or Church-men I know, who in no Age were much commended for Charity towards their Brethren; though no Christian Duty is so much recommended by Holy Scripture.

There

There is one thing I cannot forbear to mention, much talk'd of, being much in the Heads, and in Controversie in this Age, which is *Church-Government*, and which I cannot deny to be Material, it being the Hedge about the Vineyard, without which the tender Plants cannot be raised, neither the mature Fruit well preserved; Yet in comparison of several others, it appears not to be of so great Consequence, being that which so many Learned, Pious and Orthodox Divines differ so much upon, who would suffer Martyrdom before they would yield to *Points*, that make not so great Noise, and tho that *Fence* be of very good use, it cannot be supposed, it is raised to keep out Fellow-labourers, who are willing to work in the Vineyard; *Since those came in the last hour, were made equal with those that came in at the first hour, who had born the burden, and heat of the day*; So it would seem reasonable, that since the Bishops, who were look'd upon as your Persecutors, being laid aside by Act of Parliament, and of whom, tho it cannot be said, they did come up the length of the Piety, or Moral Virtues, of those Bishops of the Primitive Times, or of those in our Neighbour Nation of *England*, who have given so recent a Testimony of their Faithfulness; Yet that should be no hinderance, why those should not be cordially received into the Government, who are already in the Exercise of the more Essentials, with this double Advantage, both to strengthen you considerably, and leave the others without so much as the hopes of either Party, or Abettors.

What can after this be the Grounds of rational Apprehensions or Jealousies? Since Episcopacy is now Abolished, and Presbytery Established by an Act of Parliament, which his Majesty since, hath given repeated Assurances, not to alter; Sure then the most Prudent, whereof, I am perswaded, there are many in this Grave and Wise Assembly, will not stand upon Niceties and Punctilio's, so extrinick to Men of your Profession, which even to Laicks, Princes or States, where Points of Honour have got so unreasonable Footing upon, are at best but blameable Formalities, which neither answers the Laws of GOD, nor Men; nor Biggottry, which I hope, you need not be guarded against, though incident to Church-Men; And the Character of the Erroneous, is found to be oftneft lodged in the narrowest Heads and Capacities, and frequently mistaken for Zeal.

But I forbear, being loath to take up your time; Only this, that I think it a Stretch to Reason, to comprehend how Royal Authority, in a Protestant King, can Clash with a Protestant Church, in his own Dominions, no Articles of Faith being controverted; So I shall only lay before you, what His Majesty, with so much Reason expects, and which both your Friends and Enemies, looks upon with such different Eyes and Expectations, and is, what I suppose, your real Interest, in the first place, cheerfully to receive your Brethren with open Arms, who are willing to Join, and who have never been made appear to be either Scandalous or Erroneous, and who are ready to submit to the Government, and leave those things of smaller moment, until that great Blessing of a Christian Charitable Union be perfected, without which, all endeavours else, will be to small purpose; But upon the other hand, if there shall be any Ministers, that Preached under Episcopacy, should now have any Remissness to imbrace the Offer of your accepting of them as it will discover what Spirits they are of, and what Measures should be taken, so it should not retard, nor render suspect; those who freely offer themselves.

But I shall hope, that henceforth, the only Endeavour shall be, in an holy Emulation, who shall shew most readiness, to be Unite; That they may join their Labours, in the work of the Ministry; And that my part may only be that of a *Witness*, with the Satisfaction of having the Honour to Acquaint his Majesty of what I am confident he will be very well pleased with.